

# THE NAVAL QUESTION

SPEECH DELIVERED BY

MR. R. L. BORDEN, M.P.

12TH JANUARY, 1910

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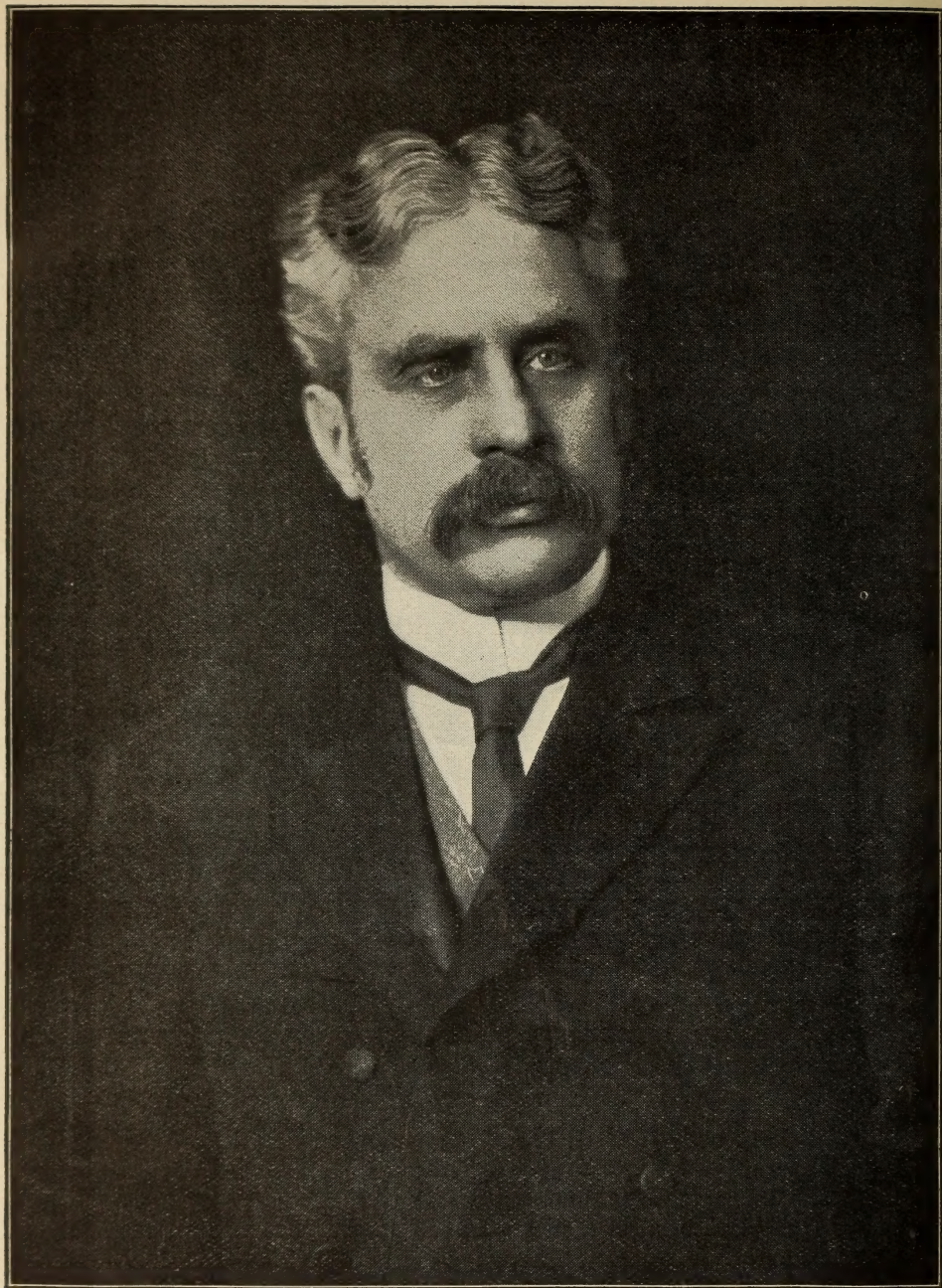
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Mr. R. L. Borden. Mr. Speaker, we all regret the indisposition of the Minister of Marine and Fisheries (Mr. Brodeur), and we trust, with the Prime Minister, that he may be speedily restored to health, and be able to give upon the second reading of this Bill the fuller explanations which have been promised. It is very natural that so important a subject as this should have attracted a great deal of attention throughout the country, since the date of the resolution which was passed unanimously by this House in the month of March last. That resolution was the outcome of a notice of motion placed upon the order paper by my hon. friend from North Toronto (Mr. Foster). In the discussion which arose upon it different views were expressed. While it may not have been satisfactory to every member of the House, and indeed in all its terms it was not absolutely satisfactory to myself, nevertheless it seemed eminently desirable at the time that it should receive the unanimous support of this House. The subject of the participation of Canada in the naval defence of the empire has naturally aroused a great deal of interest. The resolution itself has not escaped comment and criticism, and I am very glad so far as I am concerned, that that comment and that criticism have not been altogether along party lines.

I do not think that any one in this country is prepared to deny the advantage of the present relations and the present connection of Canada with the British empire. The safety of our commerce, the security of our shores, the safeguarding of our citizens and their property upon every sea and under every sky, the powerful protection of the British flag, the advantages of the diplomatic and consular service of the British empire, with all the might and influence and prestige which that service embodies, the principles of right and justice which are inseparably connected with British institutions and traditions—all these constitute advantages so enormous as to awaken the liveliest appreciation in the mind of every thoughtful citizen of Canada. More than that, Mr. Speaker, the outlook which Canada enjoys as a part of the British empire means a great deal. It is something for us in this country to be able to say to-day that any Canadian has the like legitimate right to aspire to be Prime Minister of Great Britain as to be Prime Minister of Canada.

My right hon. friend the Prime Minister, in days gone by, has not perhaps taken the same view with regard to our connection with the empire which I myself entertain; but I do not desire to awaken any controversial discussion of that kind to-day. I was a little surprised at a statement which the right hon. the Prime Minister made during the early part of the session—a statement in which he declared that if we did have a Canadian navy or a Canadian naval service, that Canadian navy or Canadian naval service would take no part in any war in which Great Britain might be involved unless this parliament should first consent. I am glad that my right hon. friend has receded, if I understand him rightly, from that position. I do not see how he could avoid receding from it because a declaration of that kind would mean Canada's absolute and complete independence of the British empire. My right hon. friend has admitted it here to-day in the brief remarks which he made. He has said that when the British empire is at war Canada is at war—and he has said that correctly. He is absolutely right in that regard because it would be impossible for the British empire to be involved in war with a great naval power or with any power unless, as a necessary consequence of



that war, any naval service, or any fleet, which we might possess would be subject to attack by the ships of the enemy, and our coasts and our cities would be exposed to raid. The suggestion that we, while preserving our connection with the British empire, can be at peace with any other power then at war with Great Britain, is the idle dream of some man who has not thought upon this subject at all. Look at the situation for one moment and my right hon. friend and other hon. gentlemen in this House will realize that to the full. Suppose that a Canadian unit of the British navy should be organized—and I prefer to speak of it in that way rather than as a Canadian navy pure and simple—suppose that a Canadian unit of the British navy, or of the Imperial navy should be organized and suppose that a cruiser of some great naval power should commit a wanton act of aggression upon our coasts, or should attack one of our cruisers; does not every hon. gentleman in this House understand that the whole might and power of the British navy would be available to this country to avenge that insult and redress that wrong? How is it possible for any man in this country to imagine that Canada could be at peace with any great naval power in the world if that power at that very moment were at war with Great Britain? The thing is absolutely inconceivable. The nations of the British empire are separated by great stretches of ocean, the empire covers every continent in the world and these great nations are divided by vast distances, but upon the sea, any British navy, any Imperial navy, must be one. The jurisdiction and power of our government and of this parliament over expenditure and over control in time of peace must be maintained. I frankly admit that we must maintain that principle in view of our autonomy; but in time of war the naval force of Canada, the Canadian unit of the British navy, must be part of the British navy when engaged in the preservation and defence of this great empire.

Now, I realize that there are a great many people in Canada who have made their views heard in recent months in opposition to what they call militarism. I am opposed to militarism and I believe that every hon. member of

this House is opposed to militarism. There is no doubt about the evil of war. The fact that war exists to-day, the fact that preparation for war is maintained upon so gigantic a scale on the continent of Europe is the best possible evidence that what we call the civilization of the twentieth century is only a very thin veneer over a certain underlying barbarism which has always prevailed throughout the world. War is an economic crime. It is pitiful to think of the suffering and starvation that prevail throughout the earth while nations are spending untold millions in preparation for subjugating each other or in contending for the mastery of the world. But, let us realize that war between nations is in truth the court of final appeal and that at the present time there is no other. In every constituted state there are courts, there is the majesty of the law; and the final vindication of the law must depend on the power of the state in every organized community. But, between the nations of the world, as organized at the present time, there is no court of appeal except the sword. A Canadian writer, Mr. Carman, in a very interesting book which he has written upon the Ethics of Imperialism, uses these words:

“Of course war is costly. The world loses immensely by permitting it. The time will come when it will not allow destructive fighting between nations over any question between them, any more than a community will let two farmers burn each other's barns because they do not agree where a fence ought to run. But the world can only stop war in the same way that a community does; that is by providing an impartial court which the nations will trust, and then supporting its rulings with overwhelming force. . . . Peace is only to be defended by the weapons of war.”

And His Majesty King Edward, the Peacemaker, in July last went to the root of the whole matter when he declared at Liverpool that readiness for defence is the strongest of the safeguards for peace. If you unroll the pages of history you will find that no nation has ever survived whose people were too selfish or too cowardly to fight for the defence of their territory and the preservation of their national existence. It has been suggested that Canada can never have need of a navy, whether she belongs to the British empire or otherwise. Look at the



capture not many years ago of a Canadian ship on the high seas by one of the South American powers. Look at the pressure of Oriental nations upon our western coast and realize if you will that it would be the most utter folly for Canada to attempt to isolate herself from the activities of the world. Canada can not be a hermit nation. Canadian interests will exist and must be protected not only upon the high seas, but in every quarter of the globe. The great empire of China attempted to isolate herself from the rest of the world and did so with some measure of success, but the result was not encouraging. To conceive that Canada could play any such part in these days of steam and electricity, when the oceans of the world have ceased to be an impassable barrier and have become magnificent highways, is but an idle dream.

Those who oppose what they call militarism in this country are apparently under the impression that our participation in the defence of this great empire will impose upon the people of Canada greater burdens than would have to be endured if we were an independent nation or if we were absorbed by the great republic to the south. Let me point out the absolute and utter fallacy of that. Put aside for the moment, if you wish, the ties of blood and allegiance and tradition. Consider, if you like, the purely economic aspect; estimate the fair, reasonable share which we ought to undertake in organizing an effective defence of the empire; estimate on the other side the cost of our naval and military defence, if Canada were an independent nation prepared to defend its territories and make its flag respected. Consider on which side the balance lies, and it is my profound conviction that even upon this purely business basis you will find it largely in favour of our participation in the defence of the empire. The great Conservative leaders of bygone days, Sir John Macdonald and Sir George Etienne Cartier, fully realized the truth which I have just expressed.

The Articles of War refer to the navy in these striking words:

‘The Navy, under the Good Providence of God, upon which the safety of the realm doth chiefly depend.’

Gladstone used these words in 1878:

'The strength of England is not to be found in alliances with great military powers, but is to be found henceforth in the efficiency and supremacy of her navy—a navy as powerful as the navies of all Europe.'

That we enjoy British institutions, British liberty, British justice, that this wonderful majestic heritage of Canada is ours with all its infinity of promise for the future; all these blessings under Providence are ours because of the British navy. A distinguished American naval authority, Captain Mahan, has demonstrated in his well known work that in all the great naval wars recorded in history the issue depended upon the control of the sea. In one striking sentence he says:

'At Trafalgar it was not Villeneuve that failed but Napoleon that was vanquished; not Nelson that won but England that was saved.'

I might quote also the words of the present Secretary for the Colonies, Sir Edward Grey, who in June 1909, giving his view as to the necessity of the navy for the permanency of the the empire, said:

'The navy is the common security of the whole empire. If it ever fails to be that it will be of no use for us to discuss any other subjects, and the maintenance of the navy in that position must therefore be the care not only of us at home but of the self governing Dominions beyond the seas.'

Now, Sir, I come to the resolution of March, 1909, and I desire to state that having heard all that has been said against that resolution passed unanimously by the House of Commons; having given careful and deliberate attention to every criticism that has been urged against it, if I were speaking to-day under the same conditions that then existed I would support that resolution just as I did in March, 1909. I realize that the party system is not the best in international or defensive matters; I realize that it is desirable to keep these matters, whenever possible, above the controversy of party strife, and I realize fully that the statesmen of Great Britain, in respect to foreign affairs have endeavoured to act in the best interests of the empire for the time being and to put aside party considerations. I know that it has been urged, and with some force, that we in



Canada cannot properly take a permanent part in the naval defence of the whole empire unless we are to have some voice as to the wars in which Great Britain may engage. Let me say in the first place, that I do not believe Great Britain will in the future engage in any great war—except indeed it may be a war forced upon her without a moment's notice—before consulting the great dominions of the empire. I have some warrant for that statement when I recollect that before Great Britain engaged in the South African war, which was in the end forced upon her, she came to the great dominions of the empire, she came to Canada and she sought advice and counsel. And my right hon. friend the Prime Minister, standing in his place in this House moved a resolution in 1899 expressing the sympathy of this House with the efforts which Great Britain was then making to bring about better conditions for her subjects in the Transvaal Republic. I remember on that occasion that one of the followers of the right hon. gentleman—a man not now in this House, but one of the ablest and most faithful of the right hon. gentleman's supporters—said to me when it was mooted that such a resolution should be proposed: I shall support and vote for that resolution but only on condition that if war does come in South Africa, Canada shall back up the mother country with all her resources and to the utmost of her power. And Sir, I venture to believe that in the future the self-governing nations of the empire will have something to say about the wars of the empire. It is not wise to prophesy what the future may bring forth, but I would venture to hope that a Defence Committee or an Imperial Conference having special jurisdiction over defence matters, composed of men from both parties in Great Britain itself as well as in the self governing nations of the empire, would have some control over the organization of imperial defence, and as an outcome of such a committee or such a conference I would expect that in future Great Britain would engage in no great war without knowing before hand that she would have the support and the sympathy of every one of the great self governing nations of the empire. This would give to these dominions a voice in the control of war, because I thoroughly agree that if we are to take part in the permanent

defence of this great empire we must have some control and some voice in such matters.

The criticisms upon the resolution of March, 1909, have been many and to some of them I shall refer. The Prime Minister has told us that the proposal which he has placed before the House, implements, according to his view, the resolution of 1909, but I fear I cannot concur in that view in all respects. One of the criticisms which have been made upon the resolution is this: That parliament did not then proffer to the empire in the hour of peril anything more than an expression of desire to co-operate and an intention to perform. Well, Sir, so far as we on this side of the House are concerned, that is not our fault. My hon. friend from North Toronto (Mr. Foster) said, in that debate, with my concurrence:

‘To-day, peril stands at the gateway. It is not for me to say how great it is, but I cannot brush it aside. To-day it impresses itself upon the greatest statesmen of the old country; to-day it appeals to Australia until public subscriptions are taken, and the government is being importuned to do even more than its settled policy to meet the emergency; to-day little New Zealand gives one Dreadnought and offers a second, and to-day Canada faces that position of peril and emergency. Let me say to my right hon. friend, that if after careful consideration he proposes to this parliament a means for meeting that emergency adequately, now and as it should be, whether it be by the gift of Dreadnoughts or the gift of money of this country, this side of the House will stand beside him, and stand for Canada in supporting that measure.’

It may not be generally known throughout the country and it may be well for me to mention it now, that under our constitution it would not be possible for any member of the opposition or for any private member of the House to propose to parliament a concrete resolution for ‘Dreadnoughts’ or for a gift of money. That could not be done by a private member under the terms of the British North America Act, because such a resolution can only be proposed to the parliament of Canada by a Minister of the Crown who must first announce that he



has the sanction of His Excellency the Governor General to such a resolution.

Then, it has been argued that the creation of a so-called Canadian Navy will have a tendency towards the separation of this great Dominion from the empire. I do not see that it has such a tendency more than the organization of a militia force; less, I say, because the resolution of this House of March, 1909, expressly declared that the organization of a Canadian navy should be 'along the lines suggested by the Admiralty at the last Imperial Conference.' That resolution, as introduced by the Prime Minister, was slightly modified in the end, and, as finally passed, was as follows:

'This House fully recognizes the duty of the people of Canada, as they increase in numbers and wealth, to assume in larger measure the responsibilities of national defence.

'The House is of opinion that under the present constitutional relations between the mother country and the self-governing dominions, the payment of regular and periodical contributions to the imperial treasury for naval and military purposes would not, so far as Canada is concerned, be the most satisfactory solution of the question of defence.

'The House will cordially approve of any necessary expenditure designed to promote the speedy organization of a Canadian naval service in co-operation with and in close relation to the imperial navy, along the lines suggested by the Admiralty at the last Imperial Conference, and in full sympathy with the view that the naval supremacy of Britain is essential to the security of commerce, the safety of the empire and the peace of the world.

'The House expresses its firm conviction that whenever the need arises the Canadian people will be found ready and willing to make any sacrifice that is required to give to the imperial authorities the most loyal and hearty co-operation in every movement for the maintenance of the integrity and honour of the empire.'

The chief amendments that were made in the resolution, as originally introduced by the Prime Minister, were the omission of one paragraph, to which I need not further allude, and

the redrafting of the second paragraph. That paragraph, as originally proposed by the Prime Minister, read in this way:

‘The House reaffirms the opinion, repeatedly expressed by representatives of Canada, that under the present constitutional relations between the mother country and the self-governing dominions the payment of any stated contribution to the imperial treasury for naval and military purposes would not, so far as Canada is concerned, be a satisfactory solution of the question of defence.’

The difference between the resolution as first proposed by the Prime Minister and the resolution as eventually passed, was this, that the original resolution did not permit what I would call an emergency contribution when war might be impending or might be anticipated within a few years. The resolution as eventually passed, having been in that respect amended by the Prime Minister at my instance, does permit an emergency contribution to be made by Canada when the existence of the empire may be imperilled. You will observe that the organization of a Canadian naval service was to be in ‘co-operation with and in close relation to the imperial navy, along the lines suggested by the Admiralty at the last Imperial Conference’ What were the lines suggested by the Admiralty at that conference in this respect? The first Lord of the Admiralty at the conference of 1907, said this (page 129):

‘The only reservation that the Admiralty desire to make is that they claim to have the charge of the strategical questions which are necessarily involved in naval defence, to hold the command of the naval forces of the country, and to arrange the distribution of ships in the best possible manner to resist attacks and to defend the empire at large, whether it be our own islands or the dominions beyond the seas.’

If my right hon. friend the Prime Minister intends to implement the resolution of March, 1909, it goes without saying that the control and the command of the Canadian naval service in time of war must be vested in some central authority, in the Admiralty, in order that the whole forces of the empire may be concentrated effectively for the purpose of meeting the issue, it may be in some great battle on our coasts or elsewhere. The control of our



militia is vested very much in the same way. The statutes governing the militia of this country have been somewhat modified by the present government; but by the statutes of 1904, chapter 41, section 72, it is thus provided:

'In time of war when the militia is called out for active service to serve conjointly with His Majesty's regular forces His Majesty may place in command thereof a senior general officer of His regular army.'

Thus the control of the militia in war emergency is vested in His Majesty. So it is absolutely essential under the resolution of March last that the supreme control of the Canadian naval force shall be vested in time of war in one supreme authority, acting in the interests of the whole empire.

It has been urged also that the creation of a Canadian naval force will be attended with corruption, the exercise of patronage and all the dishonesty and extravagance which unfortunately have prevailed during recent years. The remedy is in the hands of the people themselves, and unless we are prepared to abnegate the power of self-government and to admit that we are unfit for the privileges we now enjoy, it is idle to put forward any such reason or excuse. The evil is serious, indeed alarming, but is not to be met in that way. When the existence of this country and of the empire itself depends on honest and efficient administration, I believe the public conscience of this country will be more thoroughly awakened, and the creation of a Canadian naval force to co-operate with the other great naval forces of the empire may be the beginning of better days in that regard.

It has been suggested that instead of the organization of a Canadian naval force, there should be a system of annual contributions from this country to the mother country; and I am free to admit that, from the strategical point of view, I would be inclined to agree with the view of the Admiralty that this would be the best way for the great self-governing dominions of the empire to make their contributions. But, Sir, from a constitutional and political standpoint, I am opposed to it, for many reasons. In the first place, I do not believe that it would endure. In the second place, it would be a source of friction.

It would become a bone of partisan contention. It would be subject to criticism as to the character and the amount of the contribution in both parliaments. It would not be permanent or continuous. It would conduce, if anything could conduce, to severing the present connection between Canada and the empire. Let us remember that the British empire as it now exists is of recent constitution. We are apt to consider it as a very old empire. The present relations of the great self-governing dominions to the mother country are of recent growth and have not yet received their full development. The British empire in some respects is a mere disorganization, and I for one believe that co-operation in trade and in defence are essential to its future development and even to its future existence. Permanent co-operation in defence, in my opinion, can only be accomplished by the use of our own material, the employment of our own people, the development and utilization of our own skill and resourcefulness, and above all by impressing upon the people a sense of responsibility for their share in international affairs.

I regard the resolution of March last as the most important step towards co-operation that has been taken in this country for 25 years. My hon. friend the Prime Minister has taken a certain stand in the past with regard to that great question which it would be invidious for me to enlarge upon to-day. I do not intend to enlarge upon it. I refer to the attitude which he took in regard to participation in the defence of the empire before 1896. He has said since that when the beacon fires are lighted on the hills, Canada will come to the succour of the empire; but he told the British government, he told the statesmen of the mother country in 1907, that so far as any such scheme as this is concerned, he would have none of it. There is no doubt about that, and I shall refer to it for a moment because it is not old history but a matter of very recent occurrence in the life of this nation. Mr. Smartt, who was the colleague of Dr. Jameson, moved the following resolution at the Imperial Conference of 1907:

‘That this conference, recognizing the vast importance of the services rendered by the navy to the defence of the empire



and the protection of its trade, and the paramount importance of continuing to maintain the navy in the highest possible state of efficiency, considers it to be the duty of the dominions beyond the seas to make such contributions toward the upkeep of the navy as may be determined by their local legislatures—the contributions to take the form of a grant of money, the establishment of local naval defence, or such other services, in such manner as may be decided upon after consultation with the Admiralty and as would best accord with varying circumstances.’

Sir, that was practically the resolution of March, 1909. but my right hon. friend the Prime Minister in 1907, would have none of it. He virtually declined to discuss it in the conference and he said in the end that those representing the other great self-governing dominions of the empire might vote for it if they chose but he would vote against it. So, I regarded it as a distinct advance on the part of the right hon. the first minister (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) when he was willing to accept, and indeed to move a resolution of that kind in March, 1909. In that resolution, he formally acknowledged, in the most express and distinct language, Canada’s duty and responsibility for the defence of the empire and the maintenance of the supremacy of the navy. So I was very glad to join with my right hon. friend on that occasion in declaring Canada’s duty and responsibility, a duty and responsibility which will be accepted, I believe, by the people of Canada when the question comes to be placed before them for their verdict, because I feel sure that the men of this country, of whatever race and whatever province, will not shrink from what is, after all, due to their own self-respect, the taking of a proper share in the defence of this great empire. That defence is not defence of the British islands alone, not of Australia or New Zealand alone, but defence of every part of the empire, Canada included, and of every citizen of the empire, whether he be a resident of Canada or of the British Isles.

The resolution of March last, as I have already pointed out, provided for action in emergency or peril. Speaking upon it I used these words:

‘The day might come—I do not know that it will come—the day might come; it might come to-morrow, it might come next week, it might come next month, when the only thing we could do in the absence of preparation in this country would be to make some kind of contribution.’

The resolution, as I have already pointed out, was amended in accordance with that suggestion. Therefore, so far as the resolution of March, 1909, is concerned, it not only is consistent with an emergency contribution, but, in my understanding, it even authorizes an emergency contribution in time of peril. In what way would our autonomy be affected by a contribution of that kind? Have we not given subsidies to cable companies to railway companies and to steamship companies? Have we not sent contributions to San Francisco and to Italy in times of great disaster? There is no disturbance of our autonomy by what I would call an emergency contribution, and indeed, if we take the example of Great Britain herself, we find that more than 100 years ago, when engaged in a struggle for her very existence, she was in the habit of subsidizing great continental nations who were her allies.

Let us go to the proceedings of the recent conference. The Admiralty experts recommended the establishment of a fleet unit by such of the great dominions as were able so to contribute. A fleet unit comprises one powerful armoured cruiser (Dreadnought type), three unarmoured cruisers (Bristol class), six destroyers and three submarines with the necessary auxiliaries such as depots and storeships. The memorandum of the First Lord of the Admiralty declared that the armoured cruiser is the essential part of a fleet unit. Australia with two millions less population than Canada and presumably with resources in proportion to its population unhesitatingly accepted the recommendation of the Admiralty. New Zealand undertakes to furnish one Dreadnought. The total cost of a fleet unit is £3,695,000. The cost of an armoured cruiser alone is £2,000,000. The contribution of New Zealand to imperial defence in proportion to population and resources is at least seven times that which is proposed by this government.

The proposals of the government seem to me inadequate.



they are either too much or too little. They are too much for carrying on experiments in the organization of a Canadian naval service, they are too little for immediate and effective aid. I am convinced that the policy of the government will be attended with a very great waste of money and with no immediate effective result. We understand now, perhaps a little better than we did in March last, what time it takes to create a navy. The military correspondent of the "Times" uses this language:

'An army takes twenty years to create and a navy half a century.'

The speediest organization would not make our Canadian naval service effective in less than ten years. Probably 15 or 20 years would be required; and the crisis, if a crisis is to be apprehended, will come within five and probably within three years.

My right hon. friend the Prime Minister (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) speaks eloquently of the perfect security afforded to Canadians in foreign lands by the talisman of the British flag. What gives that flag in distant seas and under alien skies its talismanic powers? I saw a great British fleet last summer arrayed in the River Thames preparatory to its subsequent review by His Majesty the King. There were 24 great battleships, 16 powerful armoured cruisers, with other craft such as are the adjuncts of a great navy to the number of 150 in all. There was the power, there was the might which gave the British flag its talismanic virtue, and it was not a proud thought for a Canadian surveying that mighty fleet to remember that all the protecting power which it embodied was created without the contribution of a single dollar by the Canadian people, although Canada and every Canadian throughout the world had the right to invoke and the just expectation to receive the protection afforded by that great armament. Yes, the flag is the protecting talisman of every Canadian. That flag represents the power and the might—as yet we trust invincible—of that great fleet and the Prime Minister proposes to sustain and support its talismanic virtue by ineffective proposals for petty cruisers which, as he at first declared, would go to no war unless the Parliament of

Canada chose to send it there. I am glad the Prime Minister receded from that view to-day. Surely this would not be a fair conception of (to use the words of the resolution):

‘The sacrifice that is required to give to the imperial authorities the most loyal and hearty co-operation in every movement for the maintenance of the integrity and honour of the empire.’

Surely this is not the Prime Minister’s idea of

‘A Canadian naval service in co-operation with and in close relation to the imperial navy.’

But my right hon. friend the Prime Minister has spoken on this subject during the recess and he has taken the view that the British naval supremacy which he regards and properly regards as essential to the integrity of the empire, has not been challenged. That is the great question to-day. The right hon. gentleman says the British navy is supreme to-day. I do not dispute it; there is not a man in the empire who disputes it. But the question is not of to-day, but of to-morrow; the question is of next year and the year after that. Britain, by the voices of her wisest, sanest and ablest sons has told us within a few months that her hour of peril is fast approaching. Take the facts and nothing but the facts as they are known to-day, and no one can dispute that the naval supremacy of Great Britain which, as we declared in March last, is absolutely essential to the integrity of the empire, is openly and avowedly challenged as it has not been challenged for more than a century. I trust that I shall not be understood to be an alarmist. I trust that in anything I may have to say with regard of the growing power of the navy of one of the great European powers I may not be misunderstood. I have the highest possible respect and admiration for the German people, their patriotism, their ability, their power of organization. So far as we in Canada are concerned, we have absolutely no better citizens, no worthier settlers in this country than those of German descent. In what I have to say, I do not propose to speak with disrespect of Germany or any other nation but simply to assert what I believe to be our own duty for the purpose of maintaining the supremacy of the British fleet and in that way the integrity of the empire.



The consolidation and organization of the German empire, the dominance of German military power, the progress and development of German industry and commerce, have been among the most notable events of the past fifty years. And the most astonishing and important incident of the present century in international affairs has been the growth and development of German naval power. And let me here quote briefly the admirable summing up in an article by Mr. C. Frederick Hamilton in the 'University Magazine':

'When Sir Wilfrid Laurier became Prime Minister of Canada, the German battle fleet consisted of four small, badly-constructed, thoroughly inferior ships; the British navy consisted of from twenty to twenty-five battleships, enormously superior ship for ship to those of the Germans. To-day Germany (1) has eighteen fairly good battleships of the pre-Dreadnought type (2) is building Dreadnoughts so rapidly as to make it a subject for controversy whether she or Great Britain will be in the lead in 1912 or thereabouts.'

And it is only fair to realize that Germany, in that regard, is expressly directing her attention to the navy of Great Britain simply because the navy of Great Britain is the most powerful navy in the world. I am not suggesting that war is in the minds of the German people or the German government. It is not known to any man in this country, or to any man in the world, whether or not we may have war or whether there is danger of war. But we have to take into account the fact that Germany to-day is the greatest military power in the world. Her military strength is at least five times, and perhaps ten times, that of the British empire, taking into consideration numbers, training, material and organization. She is supreme on land as Great Britain has been on the ocean. And now she proposes to challenge the supremacy of the British Empire upon the seas. This is abundantly apparent from the extent of her preparation, the language of her statutes and the declarations of her citizens. We have no right to resent the challenge. If the Germans prove themselves the greater race, if they have greater resourcefulness, higher skill, superior organiz-

ing ability and more sincere and self-sacrificing patriotism, they are entitled to be supreme on the sea, as they now are on the land. We have no right to resent the challenge, but unless the ancestral blood flows less red in our veins we shall meet it with a heart no less firm than that with which our forefathers encountered the shock of the 'Invincible Armada.'

Even before the Dreadnought period, the Germans began the construction of a great navy. The Dreadnought type will render previous types obsolete either in the immediate or early future. This fact gave Germany an opportunity of starting on even terms. In 1906 the Germans made preparations for a great increase in the capacity of their shipbuilding yards. They did this by enlarging their gun factories and their manufactories of armour and gun mounting, the three things that take time in building a battleship. The British government discovered last winter that the German preparations of 1906 had enabled the Germans in effect to build as rapidly as Great Britain. Great Britain has many building slips and could construct many battleship hulls and engines simultaneously, but in providing armour and gun mountings could not surpass the German output. To impress upon the House the marvellous growth of the German navy as compared with the British navy, let me read a very few figures showing the British and the German expenditures in the construction of ships and armament in the last ten years:

Year.	Great Britain	Germany.
	£	£
1900 .....	9,788,146	3,401,907
1901 .....	10,420,256	4,921,036
1902 .....	10,426,520	5,039,725
1903 .....	11,436,520	4,929,110
1904 .....	13,508,178	4,644,862
1905 .....	11,291,002	4,968,738
1906 .....	10,859,500	5,342,466
1907 .....	9,227,000	6,285,225
1908 .....	8,660,202	8,366,438
1909 .....	10,256,194	10,751,468
1910. Estimate of German expenditure.....		12,100,000



Germany has a naval programme which involves the construction within a few years of the most powerful fleet the world has ever known. I propose to refer to some statements, official statements, of British statesmen on this point. I confine myself absolutely to official statements of those who must be presumed to know whether or not Britain is involved in peril at the present time. I quote no statement or observation on this subject made by Mr. Balfour or any of his associates, because they have not at present the responsibility of office. I quote no statement made by any man in the election campaign, which is now proceeding in Great Britain; I prefer to take statements made at a time when the fires of political controversy had not been kindled. I take the declarations of the Prime Minister of Great Britain, Mr. Asquith; the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Sir Edward Grey, and the First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr. McKenna, and I ask you to consider whether or not, having regard to the solemn, deliberate utterances of these men, my right hon. friend the Prime Minister is correct in the opinion which he expressed at Toronto that the supremacy of the British navy and the integrity of the British empire are not likely to be imperilled.

On the 16th of March, 1909, the First Lord of the Admiralty declared that if twelve more Dreadnoughts and Invincibles were to be in commission by 1912, then (for reasons stated) twelve of the larger ships which Great Britain has at present must have passed out of commission, and in making our comparisons for 1912, we must reckon only such ships as would then be on the active list. The reason he gave was that to keep up these twelve ships of the pre-Dreadnought type after they had been replaced by ships of the Dreadnought type would impose an intolerable burden of taxation on the British taxpayer, and the resources of Britain were not equal to it. At page 938 of the 'Hansard,' to which I have alluded, he continued as follows:

'There will come a day when, by an almost automatic process, all ships of an earlier type than the Dreadnought will be relegated to the scrap heap. The maintenance of our super-

iority then will depend upon our superiority in Dreadnoughts alone. The German power of constructing this particular type of vessel is at this time almost if not fully equal to our own owing to their rapid development within the past eighteen months.'

Then the Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, on pages 959 to 961 of the 'Hansard,' estimated that by November 1911, Great Britain would have 16 and Germany 13 Dreadnoughts. And remember, if you please, that according to the official statement which I have read, Dreadnoughts and Dreadnoughts alone will count in the very near future. Mr. Balfour, on the other hand, estimated that Great Britain would then have 16 and Germany 17. Mr. Asquith estimated that in March 1912, Great Britain would have 20 and Germany 17 Dreadnoughts. Later, on the 29th of March, Mr. Asquith somewhat modified his estimate by saying that in March 1912, Germany might only have 11 or 13 instead of 17. But the circumstance that the Prime Minister of Great Britain found it necessary, within a period of about one fortnight, to modify his estimate in that regard, is a striking illustration of the fact that Great Britain really knows very little about the rate at which German construction is proceeding. Indeed that is said in so many words, at page 934 of the 'Hansard,' by Mr. McKenna, who declared that the government had no reliable information as to how fast German construction was proceeding. Now let us turn to the actual situation. What are the official statements of these great statesmen of the empire with respect to the imperilling of the necessary supremacy of the British navy: What says Mr. McKenna?

'Two years ago there were in Germany, with the possible exception of one or two slips in private yards, no slips capable of carrying a Dreadnought. To-day there are no fewer than 14 of such slips and 3 more are under construction. What is true of the slips is also true of the guns, armour and mountings.'

On the 29th of March, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Sir Edward Grey, spoke on this subject. Now all who have followed the career of Sir Edward Grey know that he is a man of calm and deliberate judgment, the last man who could



be characterized as an alarmist. Yet, in speaking upon a vote of censure moved by the opposition, he used the following significant language, to be found in volume 3 of the 'Hansard' for 1909, at page 54:

'First of all the House and the country are perfectly right in the view that the situation is grave. A new situation in this country is created by the German programme. Whether that programme is carried out quickly or slowly the fact of its existence makes a new situation. When that programme is completed, Germany, a great country close to our shores, will have a fleet of 33 Dreadnoughts. That fleet would be the most powerful which the world has ever yet seen. It is true that there is not one of them in commission yet; but it is equally true that the whole programme comprises what I have said, and when completed the new fleet will be the most powerful fleet which the world has yet seen. That imposes upon us the necessity, of which we are now at the beginning—except so far as we have Dreadnoughts already—of rebuilding the whole of our fleet. That is what the situation is. What we do not know is the time in which we shall have to do it.'

Now I venture to say, speaking not as an alarmist, but having a reasonable and necessary regard to these grave words of one of the ablest statesmen in Great Britain, one of the most reasonable and conservative as well, having regard, I say, to these words, is it open to us to-day to say that the integrity of the British empire is not threatened, and that the supremacy of the British navy is not imperilled? Sir Edward Grey emphasizes his statement a little further on:

'No superiority of the British navy over the German navy could ever put us in a position to affect the independence or integrity of Germany, because our army is not maintained on a scale which unaided could do anything on German territory. But if the German navy were superior to ours, they maintaining the army which they do, for us it would not be a question of defeat. Our independence, our very existence would be at stake.'

At page 70, he made the following reference to the overseas dominions:

‘We must be prepared to defend our national existence under the conditions which are imposed upon us in our own generation. I am glad that it is not to us alone that this feeling is confined. I am glad that the colonies, such as New Zealand recognize that their national existence is one with us in this matter.’

I am very sure, Sir, that there are a great many people in Canada, the vast majority of the people of Canada to-day, who devoutly wish that Sir Edward Grey, in making that statement could have coupled the name of Canada with that of New Zealand and of the other overseas dominions.

On the 16th of March, 1909, Mr. Asquith, Prime Minister of Great Britain, the man who has more to do with the defence of the empire than any other man within the empire, the man who is more responsible for that defence than any other man within the empire, makes this declaration:

‘There has been such an enormous development in Germany, not only in the provision of shipyards and slips on which the hulk or fabric of a ship can be built or prepared, but what is still more serious—in the provision for gun mountings and armaments of those great monsters, those Dreadnoughts, which are now the dominating type of ship—such an enormous development—and I will venture to say this without attempting to excite anything in the nature of unnecessary alarm in this country—such an enormous development as to be so serious a development from our national point of view that we could no longer take to ourselves, as we could a year ago with reason, the consoling and comforting reflection that we have the advantage in the speed and the rate at which ships can be constructed. This is a fatal and most serious fact. We have both these sets of considerations, both of them I agree invalidate the hypothesis which only a year ago I addressed to the House when speaking on this topic.’

That statement of Mr. Asquith is significant in more ways than one. It is impossible for us to believe that such statements made by men holding the highest responsibilities of office, were not well considered. No Prime Minister of Great Britain, no Prime Minister of any one of the great dominions of the empire



could make such a statement as that if he did not believe that there was grave cause for concern. When we hear the Prime Minister of Great Britain declaring: 'This is a fatal and most serious fact;' and when we hear him admitting that the considerations which apparently had only come to his notice a short time before, 'invalidate the hypothesis which only a year ago I addressed to the House,' surely there is no man in this country who will venture to say that there is not grave cause for concern, and that the supremacy of the empire is not threatened. On the 29th July, only six months ago, the Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, made the following declaration:

'If we were permanently to lose the command of the sea then whatever might be the strength and organization of our military forces, even allowing that you had an army like the army of Germany, whatever might be its strength and whatever might be its organization, it would not only be impossible that this country should escape invasion—invasion might not even be necessary—but the subjection of the country to the enemy would be inevitable. It followed from that proposition that it is the business of the Admiralty to maintain our naval supremacy at such a point that we cannot lose the command of the sea and that against any reasonable possible combination that could be brought against us we must hold the sea and make invasion impracticable.'

Now, let us look for a moment, at the provisions of the German Navy Bill and at the clear declarations of prominent authorities in regard to the motives which have inspired Germany in entering upon its naval programme. Again I say that I do not pretend to argue that Germany has at this present moment any desire to make war upon Great Britain. But that is not the test because the disintegration, dismemberment and dissolution of the British empire will inevitably follow if British naval supremacy once passes away; it would follow without the striking of a blow and without the firing of a gun. The German Naval Bill of 1900 contains the following recital and preamble:

'Germany must possess a battle fleet so strong that a war with her would, even for the greatest naval power, be accom-

panied with such dangers as would render that power's position doubtful.'

This seems to be an express declaration of intention, in case of conflict, to challenge the British navy for the mastery of the seas, because the words 'greatest naval power,' as contained in the recital of the German Naval Bill, can have reference to one power alone and that is the British empire.

A prominent German authority and writer on naval and military affairs, Count Ernest Von Reventlow, in the last 'Navy League Annual' puts the case in a nutshell. This gentleman is a retired captain-lieutenant in the German navy, he is a writer on naval and military affairs, he is associated with the pan-Germanic party and I believe he is regarded as one of the leaders of that party. I do not believe he has any official position other than that which I have stated, but he thus expresses himself with regard to the matter:

'We do not doubt the pacific intentions of the British government, but we know that since the commencement of the new century a war between England and Germany has been more than once very imminent; and moreover there are in England quite a large number of people, who consider a preventive war very desirable. It is true that it is now too late for this, and that England has missed her opportunity. . . . . The cordiality in the relations between any particular nations, so frequently dwelt upon nowadays, is nothing more than a phase, at times a very useful one; we decline to enter here into such trivialities. . . . . Economically and politically every healthy nation works only for its own advantage. This gives rise to competition, the earth unfortunately does not expand, and thus mutual strength is necessary in order to render equalization of power and consequently a pacific equilibrium possible.'

In other words Germany, the dominant military power upon land beyond all challenge, does not propose to rest satisfied until she can successfully challenge the control of the seas by Great Britain. That means either the dismemberment of the empire or its relegation to a condition of inferiority which would lead to its early dissolution. The highest authority in Great Britain has declared that ships of the 'Dreadnought'



type will alone count at a very early date. No one pretends that the British navy is not supreme to-day, but the continuance of that supremacy will cease within the next two or three years at least, unless extraordinary efforts are made by the mother country and all the great dominions.

It may be said that upon the official figures and by the tonnage Great Britain has still a marked superiority to-day. My right hon. friend went into that in his speech in Toronto. No one doubts that for a moment, but it is not a question of to-day; it is a question of to-morrow. Does my right hon. friend realize that Great Britain, only two or three years ago, withdrew her fleets from all parts of the world to concentrate them in the North Sea? Does my right hon. friend realize for what reason that was done? Great Britain has to-day in the Mediterranean less than half the fleet she had there four years ago. She has withdrawn practically her entire fleet from the Pacific. She has concentrated the great majority of her battle ships around the British islands; she has done that for some reason and that reason is outlined by certain official utterances to which I shall direct the attention of the House later on. Further than that, speaking of pre-‘Dreadnought’ vessels, Mr. McKenna, the First Lord of the Admiralty, on the 16th March last, used the following language :

‘What is the purpose of these vessels? To what extent could we concentrate them in the home waters? Clearly we cannot take out the number of ships in the navy, add them altogether and reckon the total tonnage without having some regard to the duties which the navy is called on to perform. We maintain squadrons in Chinese, Australian, South African and East Indian waters. There is another squadron, a cruiser squadron, always kept available for service in the Atlantic.’

Does any hon. gentleman doubt that in the early future Great Britain will have to send at least four ‘Dreadnoughts’ to the Mediterranean and four to the Pacific?

A very great authority upon German military affairs, Professor Schiemann, whose weekly chronicle of foreign affairs in the ‘Kreutz-Zeitung’ is said to be the most influential factor in moulding German opinion respecting foreign policy, has

recently emphasized the necessity under which Great Britain labours of guarding not the North Sea or the British islands alone but the four quarters of the world. Here is his opinion which, according to some authorities at least, is German official opinion on this subject:

‘ We know quite well that the German navy will never be called upon to face the massed fleets of the greatest maritime power. At any moment disturbances may break out in distant parts of the earth and necessitate the urgent dispatch of powerful British squadrons for the protection of British interests. In point of fact we know very well that England will not be able to escape the necessity of sending a portion of her navy to the East Asiatic stations. Therefore we do not regard the vociferous demands of the British press for the maintenance of naval supremacy in too tragic a light.’

I would like to ask my right hon. friend whether anything could be more definite or suggestive? Has he read the provisions of the German Navy Bill in regard to this matter? Those provisions I have alluded to in part. Let me quote another very significant passage which is to be found there:

‘ Germany must possess a battle fleet so strong that a war with her would, even for the greatest naval power, be accompanied with such dangers as would render that power’s position doubtful. For this purpose it is not absolutely necessary that the German fleet should be as strong as that of the greatest sea power because generally the greatest sea power will not be in a position to concentrate all its forces against us.’

That is not the utterance of an unofficial citizen in Germany. That is a direct and definite statement contained in the recital of the German Navy Bill of 1900 and it says as plainly as language can express it that in her attempt to challenge the British supremacy of the sea Germany relies upon the fact that the fleets of Great Britain must be scattered throughout the world. Germany needs to guard only her North Sea gate; Great Britain needs to guard all her dominions throughout the world.

There is another significant official utterance to which I would like to direct the attention of my right hon. friend before

he finally concludes what shall be his naval programme proposed to this parliament. On the 5th of March, 1907, the parliamentary secretary of the Admiralty, the right hon. Edmund Robertson, in explaining to the British parliament the distribution of the fleet and the reason for its concentration in the North Sea said:

‘The chief feature is the concentration of strength in home waters, and its chief result will be additional security to the people of these islands against what I believe is their only danger—a sudden raid—and that, I hope is not a serious one.’

He takes into account the possibility of a sudden raid, he expresses the hope that the danger may not be serious, and he explains to the parliament of Great Britain in the same breath that the possibility of this raid is sufficiently serious to justify England in recalling her warships from the Mediterranean and the Pacific and concentrating them in the North Sea. Could an official warning be couched in more significant language? The heart of the British empire is in the British isles and a fatal blow at the heart must result in the death of the entire organism. Thus, the existence of the British empire presently depends upon the safety of the British islands.

My right hon. friend may say: These statements were made eight or nine months ago, and although it may have seemed to the members of the British government, to the Prime Minister, to the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and to the First Lord of the Admiralty that the crisis was imminent at that time, yet since then it has passed away and there is no need to take further care. These statements pointed to a crisis, an emergency and a peril which might face the British empire within two or three years at the outside. Has that peril passed? No, Sir, we are nearer to it by nearly a year. Has Germany's policy been modified in the meantime? No. On the contrary Germany has since put forward the greatest naval budget in her history: 434,000,000 marks (\$105,434,000), \$60,000,000 of which are to be devoted to construction and armament alone. My right hon. friend may dismiss all this with a wave of the hand and an eloquent phrase and he may say there is no danger and no peril. Sir, in Denmark,



in 1864, in Austria in 1866, in France in 1870, a Prime Minister might have done the same, but that would not have altered the record of history. I do not say there will be war; I do not know nor does the Prime Minister know. I trust, I hope, I pray there will be no war. But, without war, without the firing of a shot or the striking of a blow, without invasion, German naval supremacy would bring the ~~empire~~ to an end. It is idle to assure us that there will be no war. The war has already begun, the war of construction, and victory will be as decisive there as in actual battle.)

(Does the dissolution of the empire signify nothing to Canada and her people? Laying aside other considerations, let us remember that we settled some matters to our satisfaction and to our advantage when the British North America Act was passed in 1867. Not only ~~federal~~ but ~~provincial~~ autonomy was secured and rights and privileges were recognized and are still maintained which are very dear to the hearts of all the Canadian people. But, Sir, when the British ~~empire~~ is dissolved the British North America Act goes also and with it there departs every constitutional guarantee which it contains. All beyond is chaos and darkness.) What may be evolved out of that chaos and darkness, what constitutional status, what final relation, what ultimate balance of conflicting forces no one of us to-day is bold enough to prophesy or wise enough to foresee. This consideration ought to give food for thought to every one of us who has at heart the future interests of the people of this great country.

Said Lord Salisbury ten years ago:

'I do not believe in the perfection of the British constitution as an instrument of war..... It is evident that there is something in your machinery that is wrong.'

He was comparing the party system of government in the British islands with the more strongly centralized systems which prevail in other countries. He concluded, and doubtless rightly, that the British system was not most effective for such purposes. If the organization of the British islands is thus unsuitable what can be said of the infinitely greater disorganization of the empire so far as concerns the concentration of its

powers for defensive warfare. The mere circumstance that there are in Canada those who conscientiously object to co-operation in defence gives room for grave disquietude. I can understand the man who advocates independence. In that case with ten thousand miles of coast-line and a great sea-borne commerce, we must of necessity become a naval power at enormously increased expense or else remain the plaything and laughing-stock of the world. I can understand the man, if there be any such in Canada, who conscientiously advocates the union of this country with the great neighbouring republic, but let him remember that such a union would be followed by naval and military charges of from twenty to twenty-five millions per annum. I cannot, however, understand how any man receiving and accepting the protection of the British flag, the advantages of British citizenship, the safeguarding of our coasts, the security of our shores, the benefits and advantages of the diplomatic and consular service throughout the world, the talismanic protection of our flag, can reconcile it with our self-respect to have every dollar of the cost paid by the over-burdened taxpayers of the British islands. We have the power to adopt that position if we choose, because our liberties, which we hold as of right and not of grace are in this regard absolute; but, with all respect for the conscientious opinions of others, I cannot conceive it to be a worthy or honourable course. It is not so much a question of our duties or obligations to the mother country as of our own honour and self-respect. I am the descendant of those who have never lived under any other than the British flag since it first streamed to the free winds of heaven. I am as profoundly and unalterably attached to British institutions and connection, and as ready to work, and if necessary to fight for them, as any man in Canada. But if my country, one of the richest in the world in proportion to its population, should accept the humiliating, the degrading, the pauperizing position of receiving future protection and safety at the hands and cost of the British taxpayer without contributing one dollar in aid or assistance, I would say that the sooner the empire was rid of her the better for all. When the battle of Armageddon comes, when the empire is fighting for its existence, when our



kinsmen of the other great dominions are in the forefront of the battle, shall we sit silent and inactive while we contemplate with smug satisfaction our increasing crops and products, or shall we pauper-like seek fancied but delusive security in an appeal to the charity of some indefinite and high-sounding political doctrine of a great neighbouring nation? No, a thousand times no. There will be no such outcome. It may be that the Canadian people, absorbed in the development of their marvellous natural resources, have paid little heed to the wide-world activities of the empire, and have realized but imperfectly the responsibilities and duties of their country as one of its greatest dominions. But they do not lack the intelligence, the vision, the courage, the patriotism necessary to realize those duties and accept those responsibilities. So, if Canada be true to herself she will not fail in the day of trial, but stand proud, powerful and resolute in the very forefront of the sister nations. But she must not stand unprepared. I say to my right hon. friend the Prime Minister, so far as my words have any weight with him: Go on with your naval service. Proceed slowly, cautiously and surely. Lay your proposals before the people and give them if necessary opportunity to be heard, but do not forget that we are confronted with an emergency which may rend this empire asunder before the proposed service is worthy of the name. In the face of such a situation immediate, vigorous, earnest action is necessary. We have no Dreadnoughts ready; we have no fleet unit at hand. But we have the resources and I trust the patriotism to provide a fleet unit or at least a Dreadnought without one moment's unnecessary delay. Or, and in my opinion this would be the better course, we can place the equivalent in cash at the disposal of the Admiralty to be used for naval defence under such conditions as we may prescribe. In taking this course we shall fulfill not only in the letter, but in the spirit as well, the resolution of March last, and what is infinitely more important we shall discharge a great patriotic duty to our country and to the whole empire.





